

# **CENTER FOR IRISH PARTNERSHIP MISSION:**

- To work with Irish partners to create a dynamic model for Cross-Atlantic collaboration that will promote and advance UMass Lowell's goals to enhance the student experience by providing a global perspective to teaching and research, while contributing to Irish interests through exchange and service**

# **SEED GRANT: FUNDING FOR THE IRISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROGRAM**

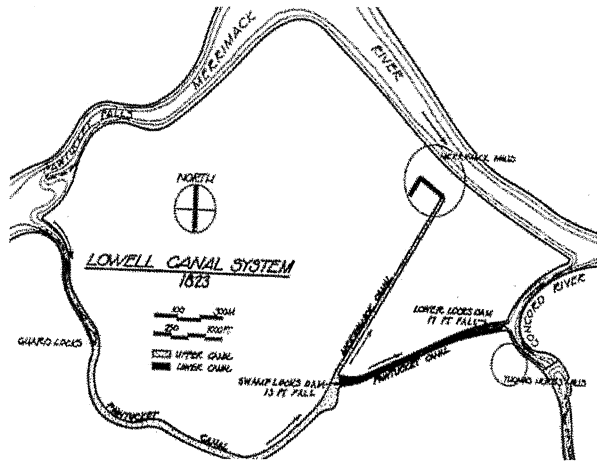
- **The Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program is part of the collaborative agreement that exists between UMass Lowell and Queen's University Belfast**
- **The objective of the Archaeological dig is to give students at UMass Lowell and Queen's University the opportunity to uncover and document the rich cultural heritage of the Irish in Lowell and Ireland**
- **Through this project, Irish and American students will gain a deeper understanding of the life of the Irish in Ireland before and after the Great Famine, and the role played by the Irish in the development of the United States during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**
- **Seed funding was necessary to support the efforts of the archaeological excavation in the hope that this initial reconnaissance would produce tangible results that could be used to assist with the development of a full three year program**

# **Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program: Phase I**

- **Phase I of the project focused on determining whether archaeological strata survived intact at the proposed location for the Lowell excavation site, in the direct vicinity of St. Patrick's Church where the original Irish Settlement was clustered**
- **A five-day reconnaissance excavation took place August 16<sup>th</sup> – August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010**
- **Led by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland:**
  - **Dr. Colm Donnelly**
  - **Dr. Harry Welsh**
  - **Ronan McHugh**
- **Assisted by 6 UMass Lowell students**



# Why Lowell?



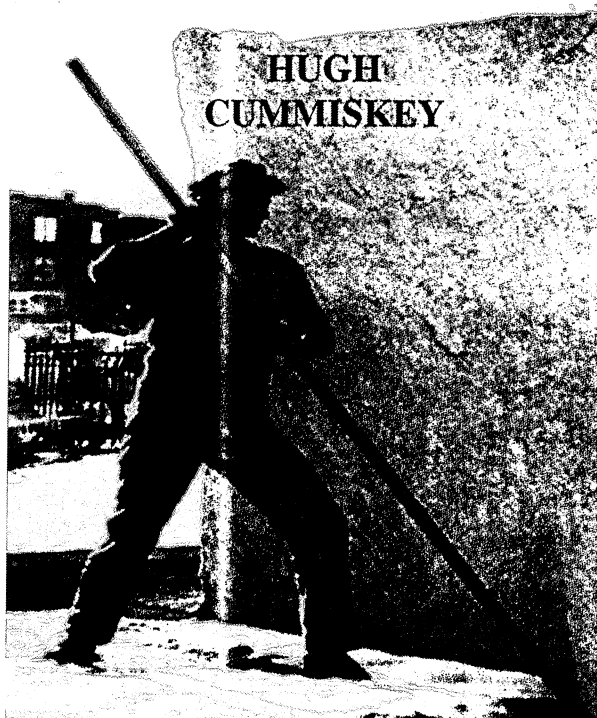
Located at the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord rivers to take advantage of the water, but needed to bring the water from the Merrimack to the mills by means of canals. Someone had to dig the canals...

Canals were excavated by gangs of Yankees working alongside Irish labourers from Boston

Kirk Boott, agent to the newly formed Merrimack Manufacturing Company, hires Hugh Cummiskey and his team of 30 Irish workers on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to work on the widening of the Pawtucket canal

As more and more Irish were employed, they settled in an area of land that became known as the Acre – where by 1830 there is a group of 400 Irish residents living there

The Cummiskey Homestead has been located in Tyrone, Northern Ireland.



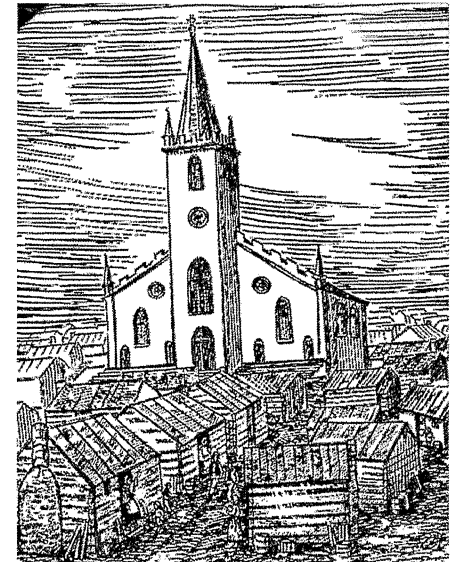
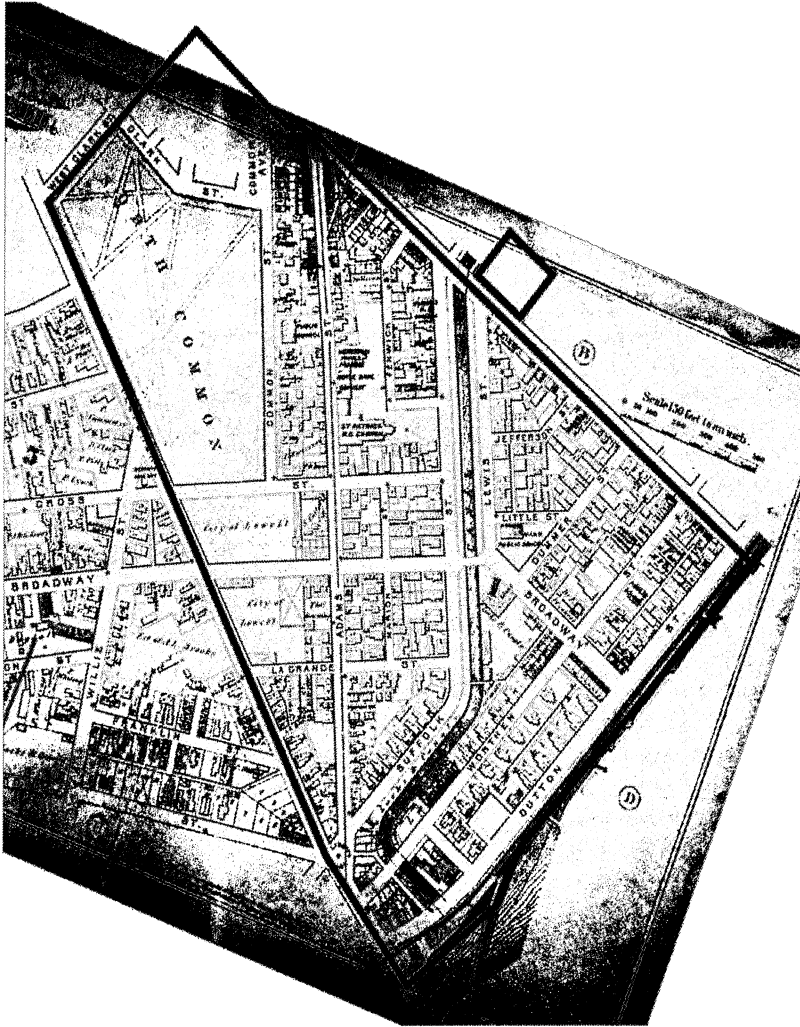
# Why St. Patrick's

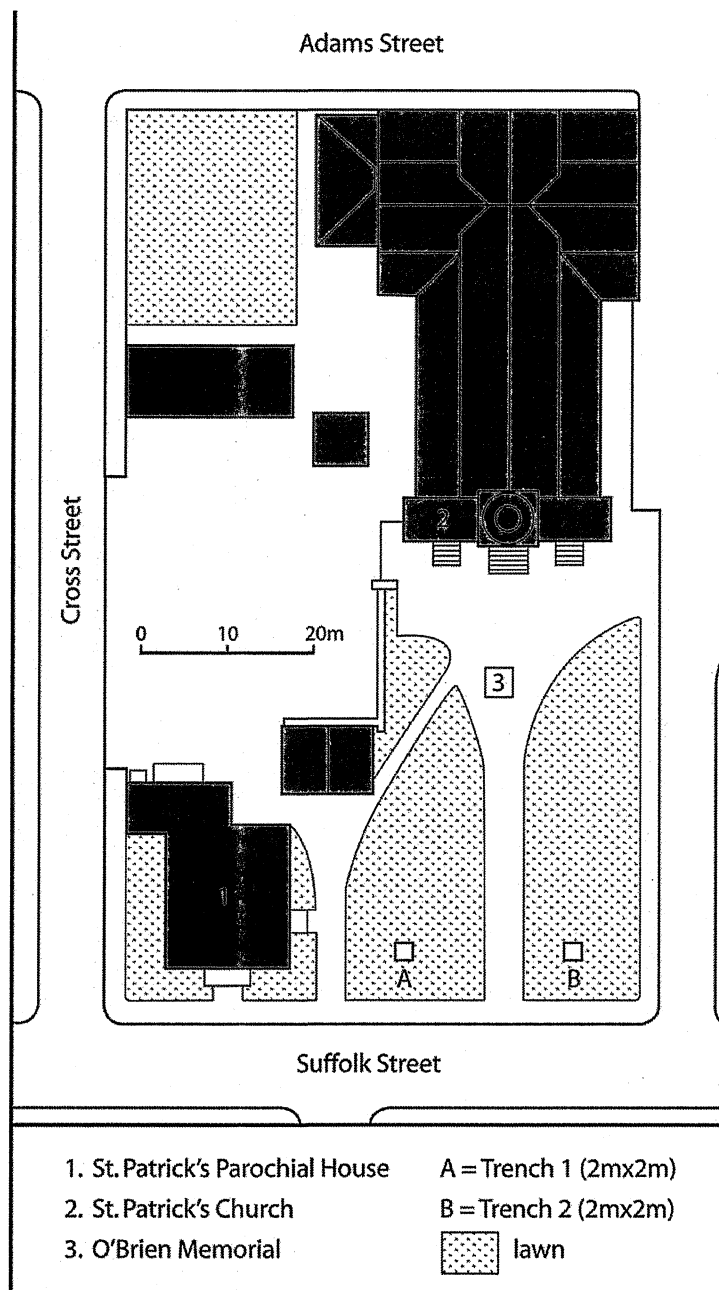
St. Patrick's Church was built in 1822 and rebuilt in 1854

The area in front of the church facing Suffolk Street was at that time laid out as a lawn, it remains that way to this day

The area was a green field until 1822, then an Irish Shanty-Town until 1854 then it became a lawn

Has not been built on





# RECONNAISSANCE EXCAVATION - AUGUST 2010

Where? The Lawn in front of St. Patrick's

## History:

- Up to 1822 – Enclosed Farmland
- 1822-1854 – The Irish Camp
- 1854 to Present – Church Lawn

## The Dig:

2 Trenches (2mx2m) to investigate what evidence – if any – survives for the Irish Camp

Looking for evidence of architecture and artefacts associated with the settlement



# Press Coverage of the Excavation

- *Pre-Famine Irish Settlement in Lowell, MA to be Excavated* (IrishCentral.com)
- *Hoping to Unearth Irish History, They'll be Digging Again in Lowell* (The Boston Globe)
- *Irish Heritage in Lowell: Excavation in Progress* (WBZ-TV News)
- *Lowell Dig to Unearth Secrets of Irish Settlers* (The Irish Emigrant, Boston Edition)
- *Famine Irish Shantytown Will Yield Its Secrets* (Irish Central.com)
- *Irish Archeologists Search For Their Countrymen In Lowell*  
WBUR (National Public Radio)
- *Digging Up Roots*  
(The Lowell Sun)



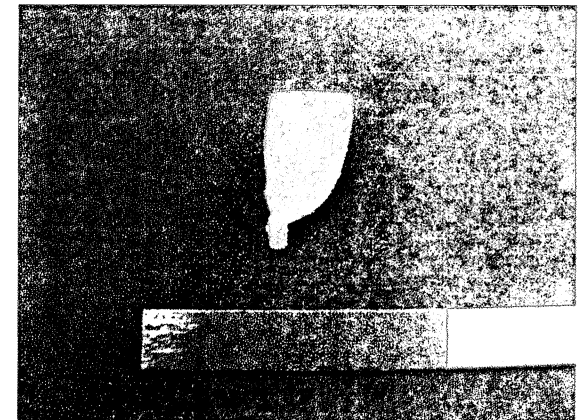
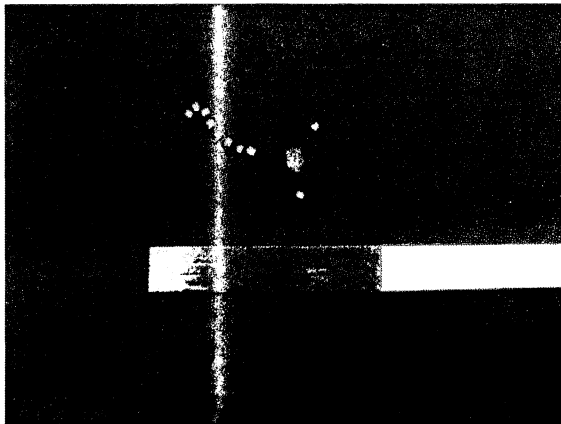
# RESULTS

Over 1,300 artifacts recovered



**Including:**

- Rosary Beads
- Clay pipes
- Oyster Shells
- Animal bones
- Nails
- Pottery
- Bottles
- Metal work





# WHAT'S NEXT?

1. Report will be prepared on the results obtained during the reconnaissance excavation at St. Patrick's
2. The Cummiskey Homestead in Tyrone: Undertake a full-scale topographic and building survey
3. With the permission of St. Patrick's parish, return to Lowell in summer 2011 to undertake further investigations
4. Secure funding to enable the program to proceed: Annual 2-week excavation program – 1 week in Lowell and 1 week in Tyrone, crewed by students from Umass Lowell and Queen's University

